

FREEDOM

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FACE TO FACE WITH THE FACTS.

THE events of the last month have laid bare in all their naked deformity some of the ugliest facts of our civilisation.

We Anarchist Socialists are always preaching that law and its administration are simply organised injustice. That men who take upon themselves to direct the lives and affairs of their neighbours in general, to make rules for them, and punish them, are in a false and ridiculous position; that the system which places them in such a position is disastrous to their own moral sense and to humanity; that by destroying kindly and social feeling, sincerity, and personal responsibility, that system strikes at the very root of the impulses and sentiments which hold society together: and that this system of judicial hypocrisy merely exists to maintain the domination of the rich over the poor.

During the past month the authorities have done more to impress these truths upon the people than all the preaching of all the Anarchist Socialists in the world.

After Mitchelstown and the quashing of the verdict of the coroner's jury there, after Bloody Sunday, and that Black Friday at Chicago, it will be difficult to restore to the workers the superstitious reverence for the written law and its administrators and guardians which has hitherto held so many in awe. The people have seen and heard too much of the sort of justice secured by a fixed code to "rioters" at Bow Street, to O'Brien, and the brave Irishmen who are resisting the tyranny of property in its vilest form, and to our murdered comrades in Illinois, to believe in the long-drawn ceremonies and heartless formalism of legal procedure as a protection against hasty and unfair judgments. Such red-tape merely enables unscrupulous lawyers and stupid or perjured witnesses to reduce plain facts to confusion, and indefinitely prolong the mental torture of their victims.

At best, when the poor and their champions have secured the chance of a fair hearing and legal defence, the law and police courts are a sort of ring where the fighters try to get the better of one another, and the umpire, instead of seeing fair, has an interest in the contest, and lends his own man a hand. At worst, such places are shameless offices of the Inquisition of Property, where the helpless victims of class prejudice and social injustice are summarily handed over by their oppressors to the most approved modern forms of prison torture.

Law is a two-edged sword in the hands of the stronger, which cuts either way according to the direction in which they anticipate resistance. Hanging, imprisonment and semi-starvation, beating with clubs till the blood streams, kicks, bruises, and insults, such is the dispassionate and impartial justice dealt out by valets of the ruling classes to men whose only crime is that they have dared to denounce oppression or urge the oppressed to revolt.

It is war between the people and their masters, and the hypocritical mockery of judicial calmness and impartiality with which those masters would mask their side of the class struggle, only serves to make it more ghastly, more destructive of all generous and kindly human feeling. And yet it is upon that inherent and instinctive social feeling alone that we can depend to bring humanity safely through the terrible period of strife and confusion now opening before us.

REVOLUTION AND FAMINE.

It is often said that any serious political and economical disturbances in this country would have consequences much more disastrous than anywhere on the Continent. Great Britain does not grow her own food. Two-thirds of the corn, the meat, and other food articles which are consumed every year in this country, are imported from all parts of the world. And, as every political, and especially every economical disturbance would necessarily result in a terrible havoc in the world-trade, as well as in the industrial production of this country, famine would inevitably follow, and be more severely felt in these islands than in any other country of the world.

And famine is a bad adviser. The workmen having no reserve-funds to live upon, cannot bear an economical disturbance which would deprive them of their present salaries for weeks and months. They cannot hold out, even for a few weeks. And, therefore, as soon as a revolution broke out in this country they would be compelled to submit to any conditions and to any government, even an Imperial one, provided that government guaranteed tranquility and the reopening of the workshops.

Many considerations arise out of the above facts to which we, on

our part, are fully alive, although we disagree with some of the conclusions drawn from them.

We fully agree that in consequence of the quite abnormal turn taken by production in this country, any disturbance of economical relations would be more severely felt here than anywhere else in Europe. But what must we conclude from that? That any disturbance must be avoided? That would be a desire as platonic as that of the old lady looking at the sea from her window, and wafting to the sky her wish that there may be no storm to destroy hundreds of ships; or the wish that the winter be mild, and that there be no such absurd fogs in London as those we witnessed last week.

Pious desires which will remain mere desires. Revolutionary disturbances *will*, nevertheless, occur in this country as elsewhere. The contest between the rich and the poor is no longer a contest for political rights which can be settled by Act of Parliament; it is an economical contest implying a thorough modification of the rights of property, and all that depends on them. And the reconstruction of Society in accordance with more equitable principles *will* necessitate a disturbed period. Whatever we say, it *will* come.

Moreover, if like disturbances occur anywhere on the Continent, the result will be the same for these islands. Suppose a European war, a war which involves France, Italy, Germany, Austria, and Russia, and what will become of the world-trade on which the well-being of this country is chiefly based? Suppose a revolution breaking out in France and Germany, in Italy and Russia, and what will become of the supplies of food sent to this country from France, Russia, Italy, and Hungary? Suppose some disturbance in India, and what will become of the Indian wheat?

These disturbed times have *already* begun. Disturbances of the world's trade have already broken out, and we already see their consequence in the frightful increase in the numbers of unemployed, who have not even the money to buy bread, albeit grain is lower than ever in our country. Was not the Commission on the Depression of Trade summoned to consider how English industries could be maintained at the same high pitch as before, notwithstanding the slackness of trade and fall of prices? The situation is such that any disturbance anywhere in Europe suddenly affecting trade may result in such a terrible crisis as we have never seen before.

So there is no use saying, "We don't want to bring things to a crisis." The crisis has already begun independently of our will. The system that has grown up under middle-class rule is already crumbling to pieces. The fifth act of the drama is already on the stage. We have, therefore, to face the fact like men, and see what is to be done under the bad circumstances prepared for our generation by a century of *bourgeois* misrule, economical and political.

For us there is not the slightest doubt that the crisis which many of our earnest comrades are afraid to provoke by a revolutionary attitude is already upon us, and that nothing can prevent it. It results from circumstances beyond our control. It is a consequence of the abnormal turn given to industry by the managers of our industrial life who are guided only by a desire for profit-making.

Further, we do not entertain the slightest doubt the situation will become still worse as soon as the Revolution breaks out in Europe. And who can doubt that it *will* break out on the Continent in a very few years? The day on which the telegraph will spread all over Europe the news that Paris, or Lyons, or Vienna have proclaimed the Commune, that they are expropriating the rich from their houses and proclaiming the rights of the workers to the soil and manufactories, there will be a general stoppage of industry, which will result in this country in a general famine, if proper measures are not taken at once.

We must be prepared for that, and be prepared to see the crisis much more terrible in this country than elsewhere, precisely because this country lives chiefly by the production of manufactured wares for exchange.

But the very cause of the evil indicates the remedy. Measures must be set on foot immediately so as to provide every inhabitant of the country with food. Otherwise there will be a famine, and famine will result in Caesarism. And in our deepest conviction this necessity bears in itself the condemnation of any collectivist scheme which implies in any shape the maintenance of the wage system. What is the use of proclaiming that the workman will receive the full produce of his labour when there will be no labour to do, even at the factory where he now labours partly for himself and very much to enrich the employer? What will be the use of the workers being masters of a factory, if measures are not taken to provide them immediately with food, and they must starve by the side of the costly machinery and buildings?

Let us consider the facts as they are in reality. There are, for instance, in Yorkshire, two manufactories employing 4,000 men and women each, and producing silk plush. Eight thousand persons engaged in producing silk plush, chiefly for export! What would be the use of saying to these men: "You are now the masters of the two manufactories. Buildings and machinery are yours. Continue to work, pay wages to your former employer, if you find him worth any wages, and continue to produce silk plush, keeping for yourselves the whole produce of your labour." It would be a cruel mockery, because both factories would have to be simply abandoned, as they produce only an article which could not be exchanged for food during a disturbed period when Revolution rages on the Continent.

Orders for that article of luxury will then no longer be received from the ruined Wilsons and Limousins of France, nor from the Russian noblemen deserted by their former serfs, nor even from English meat dealers realising fortunes by selling Australian meat at thrice its value to the poor. The necessary consignments of that very dear raw material, silk, also will be stopped. The factories must be abandoned, at least provisionally, and the twenty thousand people who formerly lived on wages will be actually starving—asking for bread before they can find any work at all.

The same is true of hundreds of other manufactories existing entirely for the production of articles of luxury and foreign export. When the foreign orders fall from the hundreds of millions they are worth now to a very few millions, and all the work which like manufactures imply, in the shape of machinery, coal, chemicals, etc., will have to be stopped, can we come forward and say to the workers: "You are masters now. Produce, and take the full produce of your labour for yourselves!"

Or, are we fatuous enough to fancy that any Parliament or any set of Provincial Parliaments will be able to maintain an industry based on a false principle—that of export to foreign countries. That industry is decaying already. Is it during a revolutionary period that we shall try to galvanise it into fresh life?

Or, can we expect that 6½ millions of industrial workers of England and Wales will be able to exchange their produce with the 1¼ million of agricultural labourers, and that these latter will be able to provide food for the 26 million inhabitants of these countries?

It is obvious that the necessity of the Revolution will be to provide food and shelter for all the inhabitants of these islands, and that to do this Great Britain will be compelled to reorganise her production at once, so as to send into the field all the labour left unoccupied in consequence of the stoppage of manufactures, to grow her own food for herself without absolutely relying on imports, and to render productive those immense spaces of land now wasted as parks, shooting-grounds, and the like, which will furnish plenty of food for a population not only of 35 millions, but thrice that amount, if properly cultivated.

The present industrial system will certainly break down, whatever we say or do. It is unavoidable. And the evil results of this catastrophe cannot be averted unless the nation immediately takes possession, in the first place, of all the necessaries of life, so as to prevent squandering and guarantee to all inhabitants an equitable use of all means of subsistence; and unless it immediately sets to work to grow from the soil all these necessaries, applying to agriculture all the forces which will obviously find no employment in industry, together with all those improvements which modern agricultural science dictates. If this be done, no famine need be feared; if it is *not* done, then we shall have famine and Caesarism as its necessary outcome.

We shall return again to this question in subsequent articles.

THE EVIL WILL.

WE have seen, in our last paper, that the belief in the essential wickedness of human nature was not exploded by that great revolt against authority in matters of opinion which took place in the 15th and 16th centuries. Not only was it retained as an article of faith by reformed or individualistic Christianity, but it crept as an axiom into the teachings of rationalist schools of thinkers.

As free discussion and free enquiry into various branches of human experience threw more and more doubt on the truth of supernatural revelation and the old unproven fancies about life faded into cloudland, thoughtful men began to seek to understand what was happening within and around them by closely examining the actual appearance of things, putting the results of their observations together and generalising from this collected experience; continually, of course, testing and correcting the theories thus constructed by the acquisition and comparison of fresh facts. This new way of grappling with the problem of existence has caused a revolution in human thought, and has led to the vast discoveries of modern science and its accurate classification of the experience gained. Let us note the effect upon the special question which we are considering.

The originator of the new method, Francis Bacon, wrote in his "Essay on Innovations," "Ill to man's nature as it stands perverted, has a natural motion strongest in continuance, but good, as a forced motion, strongest at first." But then Bacon lived in the days of the judicious Hooker and the waxing controversy between Puritan and Churchman, when Christianity was still the greatest moral force in the civilised world, and, as his biographer remarks, "He saw no more of what he meant than Columbus did of America."

It is somewhat startling, however, after three hundred years of free enquiry and the scientific method to find the belief in the essential depravity of man's nature not only lingering in the Christian tradition,

and current amongst cynical and thoughtless people as an easy theory on which to account for social evils, but established as the corner stone of a new system of philosophy.

Pessimism, the belief in the evil will as the root fact of existence, has been reasoned out by its successive high priests, Schopenhauer and Hartmann, into elaborate systems of philosophy. Here we are only concerned with its human and moral side.

The spontaneous will to live, say the philosophical pessimists, is the primal element of man as of all else that exists; flesh and blood, nerve and muscle, are simply forms in which the will clothes itself. The conscious, individual will to live in man is the source of all human folly and immorality. It is essentially anti-social; by its very nature asserting itself in each individual against the like craving in every other. Its most energetic and therefore worst form, manifests itself in the affirmation of the *will* to live not only in the individual but in the species, *i.e.*, the sexual impulse, which "is to the natural man, as to the beast, the ultimate aim and the highest end of his life."

But, by the development of a brain, this rampant and unreasoning will to live becomes not only conscious of itself and the misery of its own perpetually unsatisfied craving, but of the like nature of other individual wills. As the intellect conceives this general idea of oneness with other men, human virtue becomes possible. Virtue consists in stifling and destroying the individual will to live by the reason. The lower phase of virtue is pity, the love born of intellect, which recognises and consciously shares the collective burden of the common lot. The highest virtue is complete asceticism, the absolute denial of self, of the individual will to live, in all its manifestations. This state of non-willing "alone is right, infinitely surpassing all besides." The really good man, according to Schopenhauer, may even carry it so far as to lack the will to eat at all.

Schopenhauer's morality is in fact the Christian morality of the dark ages, without its hope that self-denial in this world may purchase a free and joyful life hereafter, and with the addition of a bitter and cynical element of contempt for man. "Study," he writes, to acquire an accurate and connected view of the utter despicability of mankind in general."

Poor Schopenhauer! His splendid intellect enabled him to house the cruel experiences of his undeveloped moral nature in a palace of specious reasoning; and the disconsolate hordes of man-haters and sceptics crowd in after him with the vague idea that their treason to their kind is sanctioned by the conclusions of the highest philosophy. For Pessimism is by no means confined to the comparatively few who have attempted to reason out the theory of the evil will to a logical conclusion. It is the blind, unreasoned faith of very many who in our century of social revolution have lost the old hopes and beliefs and missed the new. The ancient standard of customary behaviour has lost its meaning and its binding force. Men and women are breaking loose from it in every direction. Many whilst they grope painfully after the vanishing basis of social relations are wounded, disappointed, perplexed, offended by the violence and eccentricity of their neighbours' endeavours to find fresh footing. The knowledge that much human conduct results in suffering to mankind in general, and the experience that our spontaneous impulses and those of the men and women about us often cause pain to ourselves and others, become for these distracted souls the main facts which colour all their impressions. For such people contempt for others, and the imagined contempt of others for themselves, becomes a fixed idea, a sort of mental habit, sanctioned by a general notion that Pessimism is "scientific."

It is noteworthy, however, that a pessimist usually takes more gloomy views of human nature in others than in himself. He makes "mistakes," falls into "unfortunate errors," has even been "culpably foolish," allowed himself to be "completely carried away for the moment"; but then he was "the victim of circumstances." He is sure that his intentions have been good, that he is a well-meaning fellow, and that his conduct is on the whole social and virtuous. But his neighbours? Ah, that is different. He has no confidence in their natural inclination to behave like social beings. In fact, he believes them a bad lot, needing the interference of such virtuous (if occasionally erring) persons as himself to restrain their spontaneous impulses to evil.

We count many such pessimists as these in the ranks of Socialism. Men and women whose idea of the need of a social revolution is the need to construct some economic and political system to effectually imprison and hold in subjection the native impulses of their fellow-creatures, and to force them to walk in the track carefully marked out and fenced in for future humanity by the reasonable and virtuous section of it. A perfectly rational social system once elaborated to their satisfaction, they are prepared to force it upon their fellows by all methods of coercion, from moral pressure to machine guns. They ignore the fact that it must be invented, regulated, and administered by men who possess the essentially evil nature which they fear and despise.

The political ideal of pessimism is the rule of the reasoners; though many pessimists are willing to accept majority rule by the way, believing that the reasoners will be sharp enough to outwit the majority in the end.

But notwithstanding this reappearance in rationalistic dress of the theory of human depravity; notwithstanding the prevalence of pessimism at the present day as a favourite philosophy of life even amongst those most eager to effect sweeping changes; notwithstanding the much-needed support it affords to the dying faith in authority, so dear to the minds of the mistrustful and the dominators,—notwithstanding all this, the belief in the essential evil nature of man's spontaneous impulses is doomed: the spirit of scientific enquiry has given it its death wound.

THE TRAGEDY OF CHICAGO.

NOVEMBER 11TH will henceforward be a red-letter day in the Socialist calendar. Red, for it is stained with the blood of some of the most earnest and devoted men who ever championed the cause of the people. Memorable, because that quarter of an hour's legal murder will do more to shake the blind faith of the masses in law and authority than the eloquence of years.

"Our silence is more powerful than speech," said August Spies, as the fatal white hood shut the world of men for ever from his eyes. And he was right. The abominable injustice which has sent eight Anarchist Socialists to death and imprisonment merely for their opinions has arrested for those opinions the attention of the civilised world.

Many of the incidents of the long tragedy of which last month witnessed the climax are already known to our readers. Briefly we recapitulate the main facts.

The disgust felt by the more energetic Socialists of Chicago with the lying and corruption of politics, and their repeated failures to obtain any practical advantage for the workers through the ballot-box, led them to abjure Parliamentary action in 1883, and form an International Working Men's Association, with a revolutionary, anarchist programme. The organisation took a leading part in all labour movements, and carried on vigorous Socialist propaganda in Chicago by means of meetings and lectures, and its two papers, the *Arbeiter Zeitung* and the *Alarm*.

In 1885-6 the International Working Men's Association took active part in the great eight hours movement, considering it a useful means of revolutionary agitation. A general strike took place in the first week of May, 1886. The strikers were brutally attacked by the police and the armed bands of private detectives hired by the capitalists from Pinkerton's agency. On the 3rd of May five workmen on strike were shot dead and a procession of factory girls batoned by the police. On the 4th some members of the International Working Men's Association called a public meeting to protest. As the audience were peaceably dispersing, they were charged by the police with loaded revolvers. An unknown hand flung a bomb into the advancing police ranks, and seven constables were killed. The police fired promiscuously upon the whole crowd.

During the panic that ensued the speakers at the meeting and all the principal labour leaders were arrested. Lingg, Engel, Spies, Fischer, Parsons, Fielden, Schwab, and Neebe were picked out as the most energetic, and tried for the murder of Degan, one of the exploded policemen. There was no evidence whatever to prove that these eight men had anything to do with throwing the bomb or knew anything at all about it. But, nevertheless, seven of them were condemned to death, and one to fifteen years' penal servitude, for *conspiracy to murder, because the unknown thrower of the bomb might possibly have been incited to the action by something he had heard or read in the speeches or writings of the prisoners.*

Our comrades appealed against this infamous sentence to the Supreme Court of Illinois, and in September, 1887, after leaving the accused hanging between life and death for thirteen months, that tribunal pronounced the condemnation of the Criminal Court to have been in accordance with the law of Illinois. The judges did not even attempt to consider the justice of the case.

Appeal was then made for a fresh trial to the Supreme Court of the United States; but on November 3rd, only eight days before the date fixed for the execution, the application was refused.

A White Terror reigned in Chicago. The town was garrisoned with soldiers, artillery, and police, in anticipation of a rescue. Every active Socialist and Anarchist was watched night and day by detectives. All who showed warm sympathy with the condemned men were arrested as "suspicious persons." Even Mrs. Parsons, whose heroic efforts to save her husband have excited the pity and admiration of the whole country, was thrown into prison for distributing his touching "Appeal to the American People," the "men and women of dear America" to whom he addressed his last words at the gallows foot.

Despite the efforts of the capitalist press to create prejudice against the Anarchists by lying misrepresentation and virulent abuse, the truth began to penetrate even middle-class opinion. Even the capitalists of Illinois began to shrink from the cold-blooded murder of seven men innocent of any crime, and to dread the vengeance that such an act might provoke. For the working classes all over the States were holding mass meetings and deluging the governor with petitions and protests. One petition contained such an enormous string of names as would have extended sixteen miles laid word to word. And meetings of indignation and protest were taking place in every country of Europe.

Governor Oglesby is a Democrat. If he could have hoped to win middle-class votes from his Republican rival for the next election, he might have exercised his constitutional prerogative of mercy. Labour votes could not weigh with him, for the labour party will probably run their own candidate.

Humanity and justice and the terrors and vengeance of the property owners trembled in the balance. If property was to secure its triumph the scale must be shaken. Accordingly, the police opportunely "discovered" an arsenal of dynamite bombs.

The next day the bombs turned out to be empty cans and gas-pipes. But the end was gained. Panic once more banished reason and humanity. The Governor compromised by sending Fielden, the Lancashire, methodist, cotton operative, and Schwab, the German factory

hand, to join poor Oscar Neebe, the yeast peddler, before condemned to fifteen years of penal servitude; but their imprisonment is to be for life.

Louis Lingg, who had been an engineer in McCormick's factory, and had in his spare time made a small store of dynamite bombs in readiness for the outbreak of the Revolution, managed to get a fulminating cap smuggled into his cell, and died, as he had lived, defying the law and its valets.

A day or two before his death his mother wrote to him her only son:

"I, too, as you know, have worked hard to get bread for you, your sister, and myself, and—as true as I am alive—I shall be as proud of you after your death as I have been during your life. Woman as I am, I would have done the same had I been a man."

"Dear Louis," wrote his aunt, "whatever happens—even the worst—show no weakness before those wretches." And he showed none.

The other four, Spies, editor of the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, Parsons, editor of the *Alarm*, Fischer, a compositor, and Engels, a workman, were slowly strangled on November 11th, needlessly tortured in their last moments like the Russian martyrs of the cause of freedom in 1881. It was fourteen minutes after the drop fell before the last convulsive struggles were at an end. The thought of that wanton cruelty will burn and throb in the hearts of the workers for many a long year, steeling their nerves for resolute action, widening the great gulf already fixed between oppressors and oppressed. Horror-stricken, in heart-wrung silence, immense crowds, the next Sunday, followed to the grave the Anarchists who had fallen in the vanguard of the great battle for the deliverance of mankind.

That silence and that horror will bear stern fruit in the coming strife of classes. Our comrades have not died in vain. Well might Adolphe Fischer exclaim, as he stood beneath the gallows: "This is the happiest moment of my life. Long live Anarchy!" The martyrdom which crowned his life has indeed inspired those for whom he died with fresh indignation against wrong, fresh devotion to freedom. He and his comrades have perished that the principles they represent may live for ever in the hearts of men.

The following has been dropped into our letter-box by an anonymous contributor:

Where the gallows darkly rose, done to death by treacherous foes,
Swung the gallant four who dared fell Mammon's might:
Tho' each face was stern and pale, not a heart did doubt or quail,
And they died, as they had lived, to aid the Right.

Chorus.—"Yes, our deaths shall speak more loudly
Than the words our lips might frame:"
"Tis indeed life's happiest day!" Whether thus
or in fierce fray,
The Cause her children's lives can surely claim.

"Turn, thou canting priest, away; for thine own base class now pray,
Pray against the vengeance coming swift and sure."
He has turned, rebuffed, aside, from the heroes in their pride:
Their sole creed was *this*—to struggle for the poor.

Chorus.

Shrank the gaolers in amaze as there rang the "Marseillaise,"
How it throbb'd exultant thro' the gloomy cell;
For they stood, prepared to die, with both kindling cheek and eye,
So their blood were shed for Freedom, all was well.

Chorus.

They the martyr's blood who sow yet must meet a ruthless foe,
Not for ever will the workers starve and die;
And the tyrant's brutal jeers shall give place to craven fears
When the Red Flag floats in triumph 'gainst the sky.

Chorus.

THE ENGLISH PROTEST.

We mentioned in our last number the energetic protests of English Socialists of all shades of opinion against the Chicago murder. When the terrible news of the intended execution on the 11th November, reached London on the 4th ult. it roused a widespread outburst of fresh indignation and horror. Even the *Pall Mall Gazette* published an interview with Mrs. Marx-Aveling stating the facts of the case for the first time in a middle-class London paper. A petition calling upon the Governor of Illinois to exercise his clemency was signed by many artists, literary men, and other humane persons of all classes, including Mr. Cunningham-Graham, the one M.P. who dared put humanity before political ambition.

As for the workers, Socialist and Radical, they recognised our comrades as martyrs for the cause of labour. A deputation from the Radical clubs waited on the American Minister, who insolently refused to receive them. A Radical meeting was called on November 9th, and a unanimous resolution protesting against the execution of the sentence cabled to Governor Oglesby. And on Sunday the 6th, a hurried canvass of 49 Socialist, Secularist and Radical meetings elicited the votes of 16,405 workmen for a protest against the judicial murder of the leaders of the Chicago labour movement.

The quick response of the London workmen to the demand on their sympathy for men of different nationality, only known to them as Anarchist-Socialists suffering for their opinions, is a wonderful mark of the development of international feeling and of new social and political ideas amongst the masses.

Notice.—The speeches of the Chicago Anarchists before the court are issued by the Socialist Publishing Company of Chicago for the benefit of the wives and children of our imprisoned and murdered comrades. These speeches are of thrilling interest and contain, beside many personal details, an admirable exposition of Anarchist-Socialism. They can be obtained, price 6d., from the office of the Social Democratic Federation, 181 Queen Victoria Street, E.C.; the office of the Socialist League, 13 Farringdon Road, E.C.; and from the office of *Freedom*.

THE IRISH MARTYRS OF NOVEMBER.

AN ANNIVERSARY AND A PARALLEL.

THE recent refusal of the American Republic to grant mercy to men to whom justice had been denied, recalls the tragedy that was enacted in front of Salford Gaol, November 23rd, 1867, when three Irishmen were strangled to assuage England's Fenian panic.

The details of that disgraceful affair have no doubt grown dim in men's memories, and it may not be without interest to recall briefly the circumstances of a case which shows so plainly to what foul crimes a nation may give assent when swayed by a cowardly and evil-conscienced Executive, and while under the influence of a scare.

The year 1867 was a troublous one in Ireland. An abortive insurrection had taken place March 5th, and English gaols held many Irish peasants, but the men who stirred them into revolt had successfully eluded all efforts to capture them until the following September. On the 11th of that month the Manchester police arrested two men on suspicion, who proved to be Colonel Kelly and Captain Deasy, two of the most daring of the Fenian leaders.

On Sept. 18th, Kelly and Deasy were placed for the second time in the dock of the Manchester Police-court and identified by a detective-officer, who pleaded for a remand for the obtaining of further evidence. The remand was granted, and the prisoners were placed in the charge of Sergeant Charles Brett for conveyance to Salford Gaol.

Kelly and Deasy were strongly handcuffed and locked into separate compartments of an ordinary prison van, of which the other occupants were a boy of twelve, *en route* for a reformatory, and three women of the lowest type. Brett occupied a seat in the passage of the van, and the outer door being locked, the keys were handed to him through a grating. Five policemen sat on the box-seat, two stood on the step behind, and four more followed in a cab.

The distance, two miles, to the borough gaol was about half got over when the van reached a spot where there were but few houses; brickfields and clay-pits stretching on either side.

At this suitable spot the driver was suddenly admonished to "pull up" by a man who presented a pistol at his head, and immediately some thirty men, appearing from behind the wall at the side of the road, surrounded the van.

The driver at first attempted to push through the crowd, but a judicious pistol-shot brought him tumbling off his seat terror-stricken though unhurt, and one of the horses being shot through the neck further progress became impossible.

At the sound of the shots the other police on the van and those in the cab scrambled to the ground, and fled to a safe distance without the slightest show of resistance.

The rescue of Kelly and Deasy might have been a trifling matter, but that the breaking open of the van consumed some valuable minutes, fifteen it is stated. The attacking party were well armed with pick-axes, hammers, hatchets, and crowbars, and instantly began to break in the roof and sides. The police seeing them at this work returned, re-enforced by an ever-increasing mob, who had been attracted by the noise of the pistols.

Emboldened by their numbers the mob closed in round the van, until a detachment of the rescue party, who stood to cover those who were smashing away at the van, scared them off by discharging their pistols above the heads of the crowd. No one was injured save one man who received a shot in his heel.

Brett, who from the first guessed that the Fenian prisoners were the object of the attack, was called upon to give up the keys by the inmates of the van as well as by the assailants. This he resolutely refused to do.

A shot was then fired into the keyhole with the intention of bursting open the lock.

But, instead of the effect intended the bullet entered Brett's head, who fell back dying into the arms of the terrified women within, one of whom took the keys from his pocket and handed them through the grating.

The door was at once opened, the women rushed out (to re-appear on a future day as witnesses against men whose faces they could not have seen), and Brett's almost lifeless body fell out heavily on the road.

Then a young man "who had been noticed taking a prominent part in the affray," entered the van and unlocked the compartments in which were Kelly and Deasy. Once in the free air a dozen friendly hands aided the handcuffed men to cross the wall into the brickfields beyond, where they disappeared. Nor could any subsequent attempts succeed in tracing them beyond a cottage where their shackles were removed.

The majority of the rescuers meanwhile had been occupied in keeping the mob at bay until Kelly and Deasy were well out of sight. Then only did they think of their own safety, and break the bold line they had presented to the crowd. Many succeeded in escaping, but several were overtaken and on them was wreaked the fury of cowards.

The young man, Allen, who had opened the doors, was knocked down by a blow of a brick on the head and brutally kicked and beaten as he lay. One Englishman who ventured to cry "Shame!" was instantly assaulted for his ill-timed display of humanity. This was the beginning of the craven frenzy that spread itself all over England.

In a few hours thirty-two Irishmen were in custody charged with having taken part in the attack. All night long there were raids made on the Irish quarter of Manchester, "houses were broken into and their occupants dragged off to prison, and flung into cells, chained, as though they were raging beasts."

Before morning sixty Irishmen were lying fettered in Manchester prison. A cry for vengeance went up from all classes in England, and, such was the haste to gratify the demand for Irish blood, that it was decreed that the Ordinary Commission of December was too far off to be waited for, and a Special Commission was issued for the trial of the accused.

October 25th the prisoners were brought up for committal before a bench of resident magistrates. Some of the sixty had already been discharged from prison lest the great number of the accused should endanger the whole proceedings.

Twenty-eight, however, were placed fettered in the dock on the charge of murdering one man.

One of the prisoners' counsel protested against those "who were still innocent in the eyes of the law" being brought manacled into the court. The magistrates refusing to have the fetters removed Mr. Ernest Jones threw up a brief, which could bring him no honour. The junior counsel would have followed his example but that he feared to leave his poor clients utterly undefended. He did not fail, however, to protest against "an outrage worthy of the worst days of the French Monarchy."

The witnesses matched with the magistrates. "They swore point-blank against the men in the dock." One stated that he was certain "the whole lot wanted to murder every one who had any property."

True bills were found by the grand jury against five of the prisoners. Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien, whose memories are revered as the "Manchester Martyrs," Thomas Maguire, a private in the Royal Marines, and Edward Condon, an Irish American, a free citizen of the State of Ohio, were selected to be the victims of English panic.

Their trial began October 28th. At first the evidence was of an unsatisfactory nature, owing to the extreme eagerness of the witnesses to identify each and every of the five prisoners as the man who fired the fatal shot. But by degrees it became manifest that Allen, who had been seen by many to enter the van, was the most suitable to be sworn to as the actual murderer, and it only remained "to connect the other prisoners as closely as possible with his act."

The jury, after an hour and twenty minutes' deliberation, found a verdict of "Guilty" against the five men,—November 1st.

And then followed the usual farce of permitting the prisoners to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced on them.

Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien boldly avowed their participation in the rescue of Kelly and Deasy, but solemnly denied having fired the shot that killed Sergeant Brett. Condon did not deny his sympathy with the Fenian movement, but reiterated the facts of his *alibi*, which had been sworn to by credible witnesses during the trial. Maguire, who had never been a Fenian and who had been arrested simply because he was an Irishman, although he had brought good evidence to show that he had been on furlough the day of the rescue, could only declare his innocence, and recall his services in the Marines and his "unfailing duty to queen and country."

Sentence of death was passed on all five.

Hardly had the sentence been passed than the thirty or forty reporters, representatives of the English metropolitan and provincial press, who had attended throughout the Commission, were engaged in penning a memorial to the Home Secretary, declaring in vehement language their unqualified belief in the innocence of the man Maguire, despite their having heard seven witnesses swear that they had seen him assisting in breaking open the van, some of them even repeating the words he addressed to them while so engaged.

At first the Government seem inclined to take no notice of the memorial, lest in admitting Maguire's innocence they should shake the already doubtful testimony against the other men. But the idea had already begun to spread that too great haste had been used to obtain conviction; and finally, to the immense relief of many in England as well as Ireland, Maguire was granted a free pardon for a "crime" in which he had had neither hand, art, nor part.

Naturally it was believed, after the release of Maguire, that a commutation of the sentence on the others would follow. Instead of that, the public were startled a few days later by a statement to the effect that in the case of the other prisoners the law would take its course.

The prisoners' solicitor in vain took every means to pray arrest of execution pending decision of the serious law points raised on the trial. He was merely informed officially that sentence would infallibly be carried out.

Even then the people, especially in Ireland, believed that it would be impossible to hang men on evidence which, in the case of one tried under precisely similar circumstances, had proved utterly untenable. Surely, they thought, a reprieve must be granted even at the foot of the gallows! The press, meanwhile, kept up unceasingly the cry for blood.

The artisans of London "signalled themselves at this crisis by a humanity, a generosity that will not be forgotten by Irishmen. They assembled at crowded meetings to protest against the contemplated execution, and to memorialise the Government, praying for the respite of the condemned men."

These demonstrations were howled at and reviled by the "high class" press and the enlightened "public instructors."

The execution was fixed for November 23rd. Two days before the fatal date "another man of the five included in the vitiated verdict was reprieved." Edward Condon's sentence was commuted to fifteen years' penal servitude.

Hope once more took possession of those who sympathised with the remaining three, who in their protracted misery had already tasted the bitterness of death. But mercy was not for them. In the fact that Condon was an American citizen one can read that the English Government feared to hang him on a dishonoured verdict.

The most formidable military preparations for the executions were made in Manchester. Several thousands of that city's population were enrolled as special constables. The scaffold was erected projecting over the prison wall, above platforms where soldiers crouched "with the muzzles of their rifles just resting on the wall." The space in the street immediately below was railed in with a strong wooden barrier, wherein were massed hundreds of police, special constables, and volunteers.

With these and other similar ceremonies, on the morning of November 23rd the English government added three more victims to the long roll of heroes and martyrs in the cause of humanity and freedom.

More cruel than the American Republic, England, as is her wont, pursued her victims after death, denying their bodies to the friends and relatives who longed, being Romanists, to lay them in consecrated ground. But though quicklime consumed the lifeless clay of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien, in the heart of Irish patriots throughout the world's length and breadth their memories dwell eternal, an inspiration to all who strive for their country's deliverance from the alien and the oppressor.

ITALIAN ANARCHIST LITERATURE.

THE Anarchist propaganda in Italy is as flourishing as could be desired. "From the Alps to Lilibeo" a chorus of Anarchist voices sing a hopeful song. Humanity, whose other name has been until the present day poverty, marches with a red light, always forward to the struggle for the demolition of the present iniquities, and the vindication of its indestructible rights to freedom and welfare. *Humanitas* (published at Naples), *Parlietas* (at Piedmonte, d'Alife), *La Fiaccola Rossa* (Florence), *Sempre Avanti* (Leghorn), *La Lotta* (Mantua), *Il Demolitore* (Naples), are all, together with the *Gazzetta Operaia* (Turin), and some two or three more, Anarchist revolutionary papers. *La Rivendicazione* (Forli), stands alone as Opportunist or legal, although even it has realised that the one Socialist representative in Parliament should try to be less of a legislator in order to be more of a Socialist.

Besides these, there are several papers which have not a decided character, but are such as will help their editors to become in due time Anarchists.

Of course, Italy is a free country, blessed with a constitution which guarantees among other things entire liberty of the press, and with a Parliament eager to protect the recognised rights of the people. Therefore, no preventive censorship is allowed to the Government. Papers which do not please them may only be seized by the police at the printer's or on the news-vendor's stalls, and the editor or other responsible person may be prosecuted, provided that the Government is not afraid of the publicity. Our Italian *confrères*, it is superfluous to state why, happen to be in disgrace with the said Government, therefore they experience almost number by number the "liberty of seizure." Consequently they are reduced to almost a clandestine circulation, which however, sometimes proves most effectual to attract readers. Here, however, lies one of the reasons why our Italian comrades cannot combine to assure the life of one or two common organs circulating all over the country.

A better reason perhaps is that the elaboration of Anarchist principles is a work in which every Italian Anarchist feels bound to take part.

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